Numb. 63

The TATLER.

By *Isaac Bickerstaff* Esq;

Quicquid agunt Homines nostri Farrago Libelli.

From *Thursday September* 1. to *Saturday September* 3. 1709.

White's Chocolate-house, September 2.

Of the Enjoyment of Life with Regard to others.

I HAVE ever thought it the greatest Diminution to the *Roman* Glory imaginable, that in their Institution of Publick Triumphs, they led their Enemies in Chains when they were Prisoners. It is to be allow'd, that doing all Honour to the Superiority of Heroes above the rest of Mankind, must needs conduce to the Glory and Profit of a Nation; but what shocks the Imagination to reflect upon, is, that a polite People should think it reasonable, that an unhappy Man, who was no way inferior to the Victor, but by the Chance of War, should be led like a Slave at the Wheels of his Chariot. But these other Circumstances of a Triumph, That it was not allow'd in a Civil War; when the whole City could not rejoice together; lest Part of it should be in Tears, while the other was making Acclamations; That it should not be given, except such a Number were slain in Battle; That the General should be disgrac'd who made a false Muster of his Dead: These, I say, had great and politick Ends in their being establish'd, and tended to the apparent Advantage of the Commonwealth. But this Behaviour to the Conquer'd had no Foundation in Nature or Policy, but to gratify the Insolence of an haughty People, who triumph'd over barbarous Nations, by acting what was fit only for those very Barbarians to practise. It seems wonderful, that they who were so refin'd as to take Care, that to compleat the Honour done to the victorious Officer, no Power should be known above him in the Empire on the Day of his Triumph, but that the Consuls themselves should be but Guests at his Table that Evening, could not take it into Though to make the Man of chief Note among his Prisoners one of the Company. This would have improv'd the Gladness of the Occasion, and the Victor had made a much greater Figure, in that no other Man appear'd unhappy on his Day, than in that no other Man appear'd great. But we will wave at present such important Incidents, and turn our Thoughts rather to the familiar Part of human Life, and we shall find, that the great Business we contend for, is in a less Degree what those *Romans* did on more solemn Occasions, to triumph over our Fellow Creatures; and there is hardly a Man to be found, who would not rather be in Pain to appear happy, than be really happy and thought miserable. This Men attempt by sumptuous Equipages, splendid Houses, numerous Servants, and all the Cares and Pursuits of an ambitious or fashionable Life. *Bromeo* and *Tabio* are particularly Ill-wishers to each other, and Rivals in Happiness. There is no Way in Nature so good to procure the Esteem of the one, as to give him little Notices of certain secret Points wherein the other is uneasy. *Gnatho* has the Skill of doing this, and never applauds the Improvements *Bromeo* has been many Years making, and ever will be making; but he adds, Now this very Thing was my Thought when *Tabio* was pulling up his Underwood, but he never would hear of it; yet now your Gardens are in this Posture, he is ready to hang himself. Well, to be sincere, that Situation of his can never make an agreeable Seat: He may make his House and Appurtenances what he pleases; but he cannot remove 'em to the same Ground where *Bromeo* stands. But of all Things under the Sun, a Man that is happy at Second-hand is the most monstrous. 'Tis a very strange Madness (answers *Bromeo*) if a Man on these Occasions can think of any End but pleasing himself. As for my Part, if Things are convenient, I hate all Ostentation: There is no End of the Folly of adapting our Affairs to the Imagination of others. Upon which the next Thing he does, is to enlarge every Thing wherein he hears his Rival has attempted to imitate him; but their Misfortune is, that they are in their Time of Life, in their Estates, and in their Understanding, equal; so that the Emulation may continue to the last Day of their Lives. As it stands now, *Tabio* has heard *Bromeo* has lately purchas'd Two Hundred a Year in the Annuities since he last settled the Account of their Happiness, in which he thought himself to have the Ballance. This may seem a very fantastical Way of thinking in these Men; but there is nothing so common, as a Man's endeavouring rather to go further than some other Person towards an easy Fortune, than to form any certain Standard that would make himself happy.

Will's Coffee-house, September 2.

Mr. *Dactile* has been this Evening very profuse of his Eloquence upon the Talent of turning Things into Ridicule; and seem'd to say very justly, That there was generally in it something too disingenuous for the Society of liberal Men, except it were govern'd by the Circumstances of Persons, Time, and Place. This Talent, continued he, is to be us'd as a Man does his Sword, not to be drawn but in his own Defence, or to bring Pretenders and Impostors in Society to a true Light. But we have seen this Faculty so mistaken, that the Burlesque of *Virgil* himself has pass'd, among Men of little Taste, for Wit; and the noblest Thoughts that can enter into the Heart of Man, levell'd with Ribaldry and Baseness: Tho' by the Rules of Justice, no Man ought to be ridicul'd for any Imperfection, who does not set up for eminent Sufficiency in that Way wherein he is defective. Thus Cowards, who would hide themselves by an affected Terror in their Mien and Dress; and Pedants, who would show the Depth of their Knowledge by a supercilious Gravity, are equally the Objects of Laughter. Not that they are in themselves ridiculous for their Want of Courage, or Weakness of Understanding, but that they seem insensible of their own Place in Life, and unhappily rank themselves with those, whose Abilities, compar'd to their Defects, make 'em contemptible. At the same Time, it must be remark'd, That Risibility being the Effect of Reason, a Man ought to be expell'd from sober Company who laughs without it. Ha! ha! says *Will. Truby*, who sat by, Will any Man pretend to give me Laws when I should laugh, or tell me what I should laugh at? Look ye, answer'd *Humphrey Sly-*

Slyboots, you are mightily mistaken; you may, if you please, make what Noise you do, and no Body can hinder an *English* Gentleman from putting his Face into what Posture he thinks fit; but, take my Word for it, that Motion which you now make with your Mouth open, and the Agitation of your Stomach, which you relieve by holding your Sides, is not Laughter: Laughter is a more weighty Thing than you imagine; and I'll tell you a Secret, You never did laugh in your Life; and to tell you the Truth, I am afraid you never will, except you take great Care to be cur'd of those Convulsive Fits. *Truby* left us, and when he had got Two Yards from us, Well (said he) you are strange Fellows, and was immediately taken with another Fit. The *Trubies* are a well-natur'd Family, whose particular Make is such, that they have the same Pleasure out of good Will, which other People have in that Scorn which is the Cause of Laughter: Therefore their bursting into the Figures of Men that are laughing, proceeds only from a general Benevolence they are born with; as the *Slyboots* smile only on the greatest Occasion of Mirth; which Difference is caus'd rather from a different Structure of their Organs, than that one is less mov'd than the other. I know *Sowerly* frets inwardly when *Will. Truby* laughs at him; but when I meet him, and he bursts out, I know 'tis out of his abundant Joy to see me, which he expresses by that Vociferation which is in others Laughter. But I shall defer considering this Subject at large, till I come to my Treatise of Ocicitation, Laughter, and Ridicule.

From my own Apartment, September 2.

The following Letter being a Panegyrick upon me for a Quality which every Man may attain, an Acknowledgment of his Faults; I thought it for the good of my Fellow Writers to publish it.

SIR,

'IT must be allow'd, that Esquire *Bickerstaff* is of all Authors the most ingenuous. There are few, very few, that will own themselves in a Mistake, tho' all the World see 'em to be in downright Nonsence. You'll be pleased, Sir, to pardon this Expression, for the same Reason for which you once desir'd us to excuse you when you seem'd any thing dull. Most Writers, like the Generality of *Paul Lorrain*'s Saints, seem to place a peculiar Vanity in dying hard. But you, Sir, to show a good Example to your Brethren, have not only confess'd, but of your own Accord mended the Indictment. Nay, you have been so good-natur'd as to discover Beauties in it, which, I'll assure you, he that drew it never dream'd of: And to make your Civility the more accomplish'd, you have honour'd him with the Title of your Kinsman, which, tho' deriv'd by the Left-Hand, he is not a little proud of. My Brother (for such *Obadiah* is) being at present very busy about nothing, has order'd me to return you his sincere Thanks for all these Favours; and, as a small Token of his Gratitude, to communicate to you the following Piece of Intelligence, which, he thinks, belongs more properly to you than to any others of our Modern Historians. *Madonella*, who as 'twas thought had long since taken her Flight towards the Ætherial Mansions, still walks, it seems, in the Regions of Mortality; where she has found, by deep Reflections on the Revolution mention'd in yours of *June* the 23d, That where early Instructions have been wanting to imprint true Idea's of Things on the tender Souls of those of her Sex, they are never after able to arrive at such a Pitch of Perfection, as to be above the Laws of Matter and Motion; Laws which are considerably enforc'd by the Principles usually imbib'd in Nurseries and Boarding-Schools. To remedy this Evil, she has laid the Scheme of a College for young Damsels; where, instead of Scissors, Needles, and Samplers; Pens, Compasses, Quadrants, Books; Manuscripts, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, are to take up their whole Time. Only on Holydays the Students will, for moderate Exercise, be allow'd to divert themselves with the Use of some of the lightest and most voluble Weapons; and proper Care will be taken to give them at least a superficial Tincture of the Ancient and Modern Amazonian Tacticks. Of these Military Performances, the Direction is undertaken by *Epicene*, the Writer of *Memoirs from the Mediterranean*, who, by the Help of some artificial Poisons convey'd by Smells, has within these few Weeks brought many Persons of both Sexes to an untimely Fate; and, what is more surprising, has, contrary to her Profession, with the same Odors, reviv'd others who had long since been drown'd in the Whirlpools of *Lethe*. Another of the Professors is to be a certain Lady, who is now publishing two of the choicest *Saxon* Novels, which are said to have been in as great Repute with the Ladies of Queen *Emma*'s Court, as the *Memoirs from the New Atalantis* are with those of ours. I shall make it my Business to enquire into the Progress of this learned Institution, and give you the first Notice of their Philosophical Transactions, and Searches after Nature.

Yours, &c.

Tobiah Greenhat.

St. *James*'s *Coffee-house*, *September* 2.

This Day we have receiv'd Advices by the Way of *Ostend*, which give an Account of an Engagement between the *French* and the Allies on the 11th Instant, *N. S.* The Marshal *Boufflers* arriv'd in the Enemy's Camp on the 5th, and acquainted the Marshal *Villars*, That he did not come in any Character, but to receive his Commands for the King's Service, and communicate to him his Orders upon the present Posture of Affairs. On the 9th, both Armies advanc'd towards each other, and cannonaded all the ensuing Day till the Close of the Evening, and stood to their Arms all the Night between the 10th and 11th. Early on the 11th, the Cannonading was renew'd about Seven: The Duke of *Argyle* had Orders to attack the Wood *Sarr* on the Enemy's Right, which he executed so successfully, that he penetrated it, and won a considerable Post. The Prince of *Orange* had the same good Fortune at a Wood on their Left: After which, the whole Body of the Confederates, join'd by the Forces from the Siege, march'd up, and engag'd the Enemy, who were drawn up at some Distance from these Woods. The Dispute was very warm for some Time; but towards Noon the *French* began to give Ground from one Wing to the other: Which Advantage being observ'd by our Generals, the whole Army was urg'd on with fresh Vigour, and in a few Hours the Day ended with the intire Defeat of the Enemy.

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